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THE COUNTRY WIFE: A DESIGN INTERPRETATION

By


Margaret F. Hayes

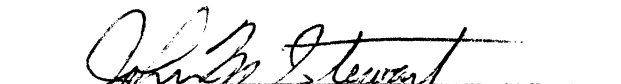
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M.A., California State University, Humboldt, 1971

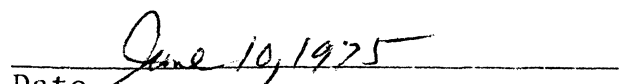
Presented in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the degree of

Master of Fine Arts  
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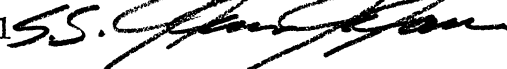


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Hayes, Margaret F., M.F.A., June, 1975

Drama

A report concerning the Costume Designs for The Country Wife (70 pp.)

Director: Stephanie Schoelzel 

The purpose of this study is to examine the costume designs for The Country Wife, a play presented in the Masquer Theatre, March 5 and 6, 1975. It includes an analysis of the play, playwright and period in which the play was written. The study also involves a discussion of the design concept and process and a step-by-step account of the techniques employed in the construction of the costumes.

Conclusions, in the form of an evaluation, are based on the relationship of the actual costumes to the original design plates and the design concept. The various construction techniques and processes are evaluated in terms of efficiency and effect.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

"Costume . . . is the outward and visible sign of the inner spirit which informs any given period and nationality."<sup>1</sup>

The inner spirit of a period is often difficult to capture, particularly when one is designing costumes for a theatrical production. Yes, costume is a visible sign of the inner spirit but how does one go about adapting that idea to a particular play? What images does one use? Can one adapt the "inner spirit" of a particular age without using costumes based on that age? Successfully? These are just a few of the questions that I tried to be constantly aware of as I designed the costumes for The Country Wife by William Wycherley. This was my Master's of Fine Arts thesis project in costume design and was presented March 5 and 6, Masquer Theater, University of Montana, Missoula, Montana.

The Country Wife was written in England during an age commonly known as the Restoration (1660-1700) and, therefore, is a period play in terms of theatrical history. Because of

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<sup>1</sup>Lucy Barton, Historic Costume for the State (Boston: Walter H. Baker Company, 1935), p. v.

this, it was important for me, as the costume designer, to become familiar with that history before I began to interpret, through costume design, the "inner spirit" of The Country Wife.

This report, then, concerns my design approaches to, analyses of and problems with The Country Wife. It is essentially a discussion of interpretation and the means by which that interpretation was finally realized in the actual costumes.

I have divided this report into four parts. Chapter two is basically an analysis of the "inner spirit" of the play and of the period in which the play was written. It also includes a brief historical outline of the period and the playwright.

Chapter three is a discussion of the production approach and the myriad factors involved in the design process.

Chapter four is an investigation of the processes involved in the actual construction of the costume designs.

Chapter five concludes this thesis report with an evaluation and examination of the vices and virtues inherent within any design project.

## CHAPTER II

### HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

"Few periods in our history have produced such witty plays with so little moral purpose or with such utter disregard of conventional morality as the Restoration."<sup>2</sup>

The above quote is an excellent summation of English drama written during the Restoration. It is a drama in which virtue does not exist--at least for long. From the modern viewpoint, it is highly entertaining in terms of witty repartee. At the same time it is outrageously immoral. Further, from a modern viewpoint, the drama seems to lack any real substance. However, when examined closely, Restoration drama reveals an intense cynical quality that is vicious and, quite often, grotesque. It is precisely this cynical quality that reflects the "inner spirit" of Restoration England. It is therefore important to examine the Restoration period from a political and social standpoint, albeit briefly, in order to fully understand the development of its "inner spirit" as reflected in the drama.

Politically, Charles II returned to London on May 29, 1660. The Commonwealth rule of the Puritans, which had

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<sup>2</sup>Louis B. Wright and Virginia A. Lemar, eds., Four Great Restoration Plays (New York: Washington Square Press, 1964), p. ix.

lasted for eleven years, ended. Charles II and many of his courtiers had spent the Commonwealth years in and around the highly mannered and luxurious court of Louis XIV in France. Many of the French ideas concerning court etiquette came to England with the restoration of Charles II to the throne.

With the restoration of the monarchy, England threw off many of the restraints it had existed under during the Commonwealth. Theatres reopened. The somber blacks, grays and browns of Puritan dress gave way to unbelievable frivolities based on French fashion. New taverns and hostels sprang up. In short, life became gay again. These social changes came from the impetus of the court. At the court level, Puritan morality was stamped out with a firmness that can only be described as orgiastic. Charles II set much of the behavior patterns.

The sovereign maintained a veritable seraglio of mistresses, and his insatiable interest in every pretty face that met his gaze was imitated by the young noblemen who surrounded him.<sup>3</sup>

However, while the court indulged their every whim and pleasure, large portions of the population retained their Puritan beliefs and way of life. And one of the basic tenets of Puritan belief was that the theatre bred evil and licentious behavior. Therefore, the average citizen no longer attended

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. xii.

the theatre as he had done during the time of Elizabeth. Because of this, the theatre in England became the monopoly of the court and/or upper class. As the drama of Restoration England evolved, it was written exclusively for the court, pandering to their tastes and pleasures. Thus, the drama developed into a specialized form called Comedy of Manners.

Comedy of Manners, as a form, satirizes the affectations of a particular society. This society is invariably upper class.

Its main concern is with conventionalized deportment of people who live and behave within the narrow framework of a rigidly specified social code. In such a society polished, highly codified behavior assumes overriding importance, while ordinary concepts of morality and decency are rather ignominiously brushed aside.<sup>4</sup>

The court of Charles II, strongly influenced by the French court of Louis XIV, was based on just such "polished, highly codified behavior."

Comedy of Manners developed out of the aristocracy's rather egotistical desire to see their lives mirrored on stage. This comedic form began with obvious adaptations of the comedy of humors as developed by Ben Jonson. It was also strongly influenced by the French drama, particularly

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<sup>4</sup>Frederick B. Shroyer and Louis G. Gardemal, Types of Drama (Illinois: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1970), p. 25.



Moliere. Its final evolvement into the Comedy of Manners, dealt cynically with the court's obsession with pleasure. The word "cynically" is important to this discussion. It is very much part of the "inner spirit" of the Restoration drama. How this cynicism manifests itself in the drama must then be explored.

Restoration playwrights created scenes of current social life as they saw it, in a state of decomposition. There is much disillusionment in Comedy of Manners. Why decomposition? Why disillusionment? The answers to these questions are many and varied. Briefly, the English people, for the most part, had viewed the restoration of Charles II with hope. Perhaps the peace and prosperity of Queen Elizabeth's reign would be realized again. This, however, did not happen. And the drama, albeit subtly, reflected the disillusionment.

It is reflected mainly in the characters of the plays. We find an upper class pursuing their basically intimate pleasures without constraint. What the characters do is never as important as how they do it. What the characters say is never as important as how it is said. Wit is essential as are elegant manners. To be a well-mannered member of this sophisticated elite, was largely "a matter of parade, of demeanour, even of clothes and ornaments."<sup>5</sup> Not all char-

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<sup>5</sup>Sir Edmond Gosse, ed., Restoration Plays (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, Ltd., 1966), p. vii.

acters were portrayed in this way. There were the buffoons or fops, the uncouth and the naive. These characters are laughed at, made-fun-of and/or scorned by the sophisticates in the plays. However, polished manners, wit, gaiety and high spirits must prevail. In other words, appearances must prevail no matter how remote from reality; no matter how artificial.

These character portrayals were based on reality--the upper class of Restoration England. Their decadence and artificiality formed much of the disillusionment of the age and was, therefore, cynically viewed on stage by the playwrights. And it was precisely these elements--decadence, artificiality, appearance for appearance sake and disillusionment--that formed the "inner spirit" of Restoration drama.

The era produced several outstanding playwrights of Comedy of Manners. Among them was William Wycherley. His work is cynical, witty and sometimes brilliant. Unfortunately, he wrote only four comedies, the most popular being The Country Wife. That he viewed the upper class with a great deal of cynicism is somewhat surprising as he enjoyed immense favor with Charles II and the court. (It is reported that he even shared mistresses with the king.) In fact, Wycherley seemed to be a typical Restoration man about town--wicked, witty, utterly immoral and impeccably mannered.

The character of Horner in Country Wife could very well exemplify Wycherley's own conduct and life style. Perhaps his cynicism reflects his own inner conflicts caused by a society of extremes.

Country Wife is exemplary of Restoration drama. It is cynical, witty, decadent and full of polished artificiality. Its main theme is cuckoldry--a topic of great interest in Restoration England. The illusion to horns (the symbol of the cockold) can be found throughout the play. Further, Wycherley uses all his characters as mouthpieces; Horner's cynical asides, Pinchwife's tirades against city life, Sparkish's speech concerning wits. The list is practically endless. And while the play is happily (I prefer to think of it as cynically) resolved, one is left with the impression that tomorrow it will all begin again.

Wycherley, through Country Wife, truly captures the "inner spirit" of Restoration England. It was my task to accentuate that "inner spirit" through costume design.

## CHAPTER III

### PRODUCTION PROCESS

#### Arriving at the Production Approach

With my research on Restoration drama and Wycherley neatly tucked away, I went eagerly to the first production meeting for Country Wife. Production meetings are extremely important in that all people involved in the production, i.e., set designer, costume designer, light designer, prop designer, and the director discuss together their ideas and interpretations of the script. It is through these meetings that a unified design concept evolves. That is, sets, costumes, props and lights make the same statement in terms of concept and style.

The first production meeting for Country Wife included the director, set designer, lighting designer, my advisor, Stephanie Schoelzel, and myself. It was mainly a meeting of ideas led by the director. However, several items were established.

Country Wife would be done in period. That is, we would attempt to capture as much of the "inner spirit" of Restoration drama as possible. In order to accomplish this, the director felt that the artificiality, wit and decadence in-

herent in the script of Country Wife had to be stressed. Therefore, he wanted to use the Restoration style of acting based on the idea of studied elegance. That is, the actors would be graceful and elegant but there would be a sense of affectation in each movement, each gesture. This affectation would hopefully build a montage of movement that was contrived and, therefore, artificial. The director felt that the costumes should be based on the Restoration period in order to enhance the acting style. It was also important that the costumes reflect the decadence of the script.

It was also established that the budget for costumes would be two hundred dollars (\$200.00).

In the subsequent two weeks there were more meetings, more discussions. The director expressed the idea that characterization in terms of costume was highly desirable. Unity, balance, and consistency were also important considerations in terms of costumes and set.

Both the set designer and I began to do quick sketches-- ideas, interpretations. Frustration set in. We needed an image. We needed a concept. More discussions. More ideas. Finally, a concept--"artificial affectation as seen through a cartoon."<sup>6</sup>

The key word from the designer's point of view was car-

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<sup>6</sup>Statement by Gordon Hayes, director, in a production meeting, Missoula, Montana, January 13, 1975.

toon. A cartoon is visual. But what kind of cartoon? The director wanted our designs to reflect "a combination of the flowing grace of Fantasia and the boldness, blockiness of Yellow Submarine."<sup>7</sup> Images began to appear. The time to arrive at the design was at hand.

### Arriving at the Design

"Historical accuracy must be a tool, not a goal."<sup>8</sup> As I began my research of Restoration costume, I tried to keep this in mind. The moment's flavor and costume characterization were more important to the director.

I began my research by sketching bits and pieces of Restoration costume from most of the major history of costume books, particularly Historical Costumes of England, From the Eleventh to the Twentieth Century by Nancy Bradfield, English Costume from the Fourteenth Through the Nineteenth Century by Iris Brooke, Fashion by Mila Contini, and Historic Costume for the Stage by Lucy Barton. I was most concerned with costume from 1660-1700. I then began to peruse Walt Disney books for pictures of Fantasia. I also scoured magazines and record albums for Yellow Submarine.

After firmly entrenching these myriad images in my mind, I began to think of characterization, unity, consistency,

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

<sup>8</sup>Statement by Lyn Pauley, Head costumer, countless times, California State University, Humboldt, Arcata, California, 1965-1972.

balance and budget in terms of the design.

To begin with, I listed each character in the play and the various characteristics of each that the director and I had discussed. I include this list,

Horner

Typical Restoration man about town.  
Cunning, with very few illusions  
about the society in which he lives.  
He should be the straightest in terms  
of costume. That is, he is in sup-  
posed mourning for his mock loss of  
virility. This should somehow be ex-  
pressed in his costume. The director  
associates the color red with him.

Harcourt

Horner's friend. He is the poet of  
the group, with a dash of wittiness  
and deviousness. Since Alithea and  
Harcourt are the lovers, something in  
his costume should compliment, match  
or contrast with something in hers--  
probably color hues.

Dorilant

Horner's friend. The director has com-  
bined this role with the quack in order  
to limit the number of actors needed.  
He, therefore, disguises himself when  
he pretends to be the Quack. The dis-

guise must be simple as he has several quick changes. More susceptible to influence, he has a tendency to follow the example of his friends. The director wanted him to be close in color to Harcourt.

Pinchwife

Former London man who desires to protect his country wife from the evils of city life and himself from being cuckolded. This leads to much irrational behavior on his part. He should be plainer in dress than the other men and slightly outdated.

Sir Jasper Fidget

Older man married to a young wife. He puts business before pleasure. He is simple-minded and therefore easily tricked. One has the feeling that Wycherley has very little sympathy for Sir Jasper. His costume should somehow reflect the symbol of a cockold (horns).

Sparkish

A Restoration fop. A character that is totally wrapped up in his own ego. Everything about him should be exaggerated and over-blown. Because of



his self-absorption he is totally unaware that those around him consider him to be a crashing bore.

Margery Pinchwife

A charming character whose naivete is both hysterical and pathetic. Her dress should be simple and slightly outdated. Her character also requires a boy disguise which should make no attempt to disguise her.

Lady Fidget

Married to Sir Jasper. She is totally sophisticated and wise in the ways of obtaining exactly what she wants. Witty, beautiful and totally immoral--her honor is her most important affectation.

Dainty Fidget

Jasper's sister. Her affectation is her daintiness. However, the director sees her as anything but dainty. She is Lady Fidget to a lesser degree in that she lacks finesse.

Lady Squeamish

Friend of Dainty and Lady Fidget. She is an immature version of Lady Fidget.

Alithea

Highly moral sister of Pinchwife. She is engaged to Sparkish but is in love with Harcourt. While Lady Fidget af-

fects honor, Alithea is honor.

Lucy

Alithea's maid. A delightful character whose common sense and practical outlook saves all in the end.

Her costume should be basically simple--somewhat peasantry, somewhat strumpety.

Unity, consistency and balance were also important considerations. Unity is the harmonious arrangement of parts. Consistency is the agreement of those parts. Balance is the harmonious proportion of elements in a design. I hoped that I would be able to achieve these elements through my choice of color, fabric and silhouette.

Finally, I had to consider the budget. At that time, I knew I would have to make a large investment in men's shoes. It was essential to the acting style that the men have shoes that had at least a two inch heel and that had a period look about them. After much consideration of all the alternatives, it was decided to purchase cowboy boots (six pairs) and cut them down to form a Restoration man's shoe. This procedure will be explained later. This purchase would cost one hundred and twenty dollars (\$120.00). Therefore, it was necessary for me to think in terms of existing costume and fabric stock that would be available to me.

It was at this point that I decided to use muslin as the basic fabric because the shop had a large quantity of it

in stock. The muslin would be dyed and then silk-screened so that I would be able to obtain a variety of colors and patterns. Exactly how the muslin would be used in the costumes, its color, pattern, etc., was a main consideration in the designing of Country Wife.

Taking all these considerations into mind, I began to design the costumes. A discussion of the actual design process, and the interpretations involved, is highly relevant to this thesis report. I will begin by discussing the interpretation of the concept in general and, then, each character specifically.

As previously mentioned, the design concept for Country Wife was the "flowing grace of Fantasia and the boldness, blockiness of Yellow Submarine." I interpreted this concept through the use of color, fabric and fabric patterns. For example, "the flowing grace of Fantasia" became the sweep of taffeta in the women's underskirts, the color of unbleached muslin in the men's shirts and the swirl of metallic patterns painted on muslin. The "boldness, blockiness of Yellow Submarine" became silk-screened muslin, the use of strong colors and the blockiness of patterns printed on muslin.

Artificiality became fake jewels glued onto costumes and enhanced by costume jewelry, rings, necklaces, pins, and bracelets. The metallic patterns would also aid this.

Interpretation of character began with general ideas--unity of silhouette, consistency of fabric and pattern and the balance of color and trim. Basically, the silhouettes of the characters would be similar. The women's overskirts and bodices and the men's breeches would be silk-screened muslin, hand painted with metallic patterns where appropriate. White felt would be used as lace.

I wanted to simplify and exaggerate the historical period. For the women, this was a fairly simple procedure. However, the men proved to be more difficult. I could not afford, in terms of budget, to build period costs. Therefore, I decided to use waistcoats, normally worn under the coats during the Restoration period. The shirt sleeves became quite important because the waistcoats were sleeveless. Muffs, an essential item for the well-dressed Restoration man, would also be adapted and used as expressions of characterization.

Within this general framework of decisions and ideas, I began to work on characterization. I had thought of basic shapes, colors, patterns and fabric. These needed to be adapted to each character.

Horner

He was chiefly characterized through the use of the colors red, maroon and black. This selection of colors kept him somber but elegant. His

muff, symbolically squared on the end, is also symbolically black. This would hopefully aid the idea of "mourning."

The layering of bows reflected the layers of Horner's duplicity and, to some extent, his affectation.

#### Harcourt

Color was an important part of Harcourt's costume. They were chosen to harmonize with Dorilant. Yellow was used as a trim color because of its vibrancy, as reflected in Harcourt's character. Characterization was further achieved by a lovelock, to enhance the poet/lover, his exaggerated yellow muff, and the red hearts, intended to correspond with hearts on Alithea's costume.

#### Dorilant

His colors were chosen to harmonize with Harcourt and Horner. Dorilant's main characterization was his muff, exaggerated and symbolically red because of his impetuosity.

#### Pinchwife

Earth colors were chosen to reflect his recent country life. His costume was devoid of excesses such as bows, stream-

ers, tiers of lace and metallic paint to emphasize his out-of-date mode.

The falling lace collar, the lace on the shirt sleeves, bow at the neck and the distorted muff were small to symbolize Pinchwife's miserliness.

#### Sir Jasper

Sir Jasper was in cool, but rich colors. His big bow, muff, tiers of lace reflect his ridiculousness, ineffectiveness and affectation. The wig was styled into two horns (the symbol of the cuckold).

#### Sparkish

I had pulled a coat from costume stock that I intended to alter and redecorate for Sparkish. This was done because of budget limitations and because I felt that Sparkish could be different in relation to the other characters in terms of fabric. Therefore, I used colors that would compliment the coat. These colors were a mixture of warm and cool values to reflect his attempt to be a part of both Horner's and Sir Jasper's worlds. All other elements of the costume were over-exaggerated to emphasize the excesses of Sparkish's nature.

Margery Pinchwife

Her costume was simple in line and color to reflect her naivete. It was also of an earlier historical period to emphasize her country upbringing. During the course of the play, the apron and cape were removed and jewelry added bit by bit to reflect her growing awareness of city life and all it implies.

Lady Fidget

Her colors were cool blues to provide an intended dichotomy. Lady Fidget had a calculating, passionate nature but, to the public, she was a lady of honor. Since this was an affected facade, the blues, tiers of lace, exaggerated overskirt and jewels were intended to reflect the artificiality of this facade.

Dainty Fidget

Shades of blue were used to identify Dainty with Sir Jasper and Lady Fidget. The colors were also used as a contrast to Dainty's true personality. I think of those colors as being fairly dainty. Dainty was not dainty. The pleated lace was used to emphasize Dainty's vacillating nature.

Lady Squeamish

This character needed to be in cool colors but blues could not be used as

the Fidget family was identified with that color. Hence, the shades of purple. The use of yellow and red ribbons reflected Lady Squeamish's lack of maturity and taste.

Alithea

Basically warm colors were chosen for Alithea. The silk-screen pattern of hearts, however, was done in a dark purple. This was intended to emphasize Alithea's nature--duty over passion. She was further characterized by scent bottles suspended from the waist. It was a small affectation. Her overskirt and lace trim were less exaggerated to emphasize her lack of artificiality.

Lucy

Her basic colors were chosen to reflect peasantry. The overskirt draped from right to left side and the exposure of cleavage was intended to reflect coquetry and the strumpet-like qualities of Lucy's nature.

As one can see, I relied on color, trim and exaggeration to reflect characterization. The simplicity and similarity of line and the limiting of fabric use to felt, muslin and taffeta, would provide unity, consistency and balance in terms



of line and fabric. It would also subtly enhance the cartoon quality implied by the design concept,

The finalized designs are included in the appendix of this thesis report.

After the final renderings had been approved by both the director and my advisor, I began to plan the construction of the costumes.

## CHAPTER IV

### EXECUTING THE DESIGNS

The first week of the construction period was spent in doing the preliminary organizational work. This included the development of schedules, lists and charts. It also included the pulling of appropriate costumes and fabric from existing stock, purchasing fabric and ordering costume pieces that I could not buy locally.

The schedules, lists and charts are fairly basic to a designer's organization. I began with a costume plot, followed by a costume list and, finally, a work schedule. The costume plot is included in the appendix.

The next step was to pull from stock those costume pieces that I intended to adapt for various characters. These costume pieces were:

1. Capes for Dorilant's Quack disguise and for Alithea
2. Sparkish's coat
3. Lucy's underskirt
4. Alithea's underskirt
5. Margery Pinchwife's skirt and bodice
6. Margery Pinchwife's disguise as a boy
7. Donilant's and Harcourt's disguise as a priest

8. Various rehearsal items such as rehearsal skirts and shoes for the women, handkerchiefs, fans, and canes for everyone, and hats for the men.

At the same time, I pulled the muslin that I needed and divided it into the various amounts of yardage that was required for each garment that was to be constructed out of muslin. The fabric was then pre-shrunk. This procedure is simply contracting (shrinking) the fabric before construction by washing it in hot water. This allows for shrinkage to take place before the garment is cut.

In order to allow a safe margin of time for delivery, I then did the ordering. This involved ordering the cowboy boots from Payless Shoes in Missoula, Montana, as they did not have all sizes in stock. A dozen pairs of men's white hose were also ordered.

Shopping for fabric was a fairly simple task since I had explored many of the possibilities during the design process. It involved buying felt for the mens' waistcoats and muffs, taffeta for the women's underskirts (Lady Fidget, Dainty Fidget, and Lady Squeamish) and white felt for lace and trim. It also involved buying supplies for the silk-screening process. These supplies included inks, two squeegees, cleaning solvent, stencil-adhering solvent, water-base blackout and stencils. The silk-screening process will be discussed later in this chapter.

The basic organizational work and shopping had been completed. It was at this point that actual construction of the costumes began. The execution of the designs for Country Wife involved dyeing, silk-screening, hand painting fabric, use of period patterns and special construction techniques. I will discuss each of these procedures separately.

### Dyeing

Before beginning the dyeing process, I had prepared the proper amount of yardage needed for each garment by pre-shrinking it. At the same time, I had pinned a section of paper to each piece noting which character it belonged to and what costume piece it would become (example: Sparkish: pants). With this accomplished, I made up a master dye sheet listing each character and the pieces of his costume that needed to be dyed. Fabric samples were then attached so that there would be no confusion as to the color needed.

The actual dyeing process was quite simple but very time consuming. The basic dyes used were industrial dyes, direct and union. Direct dyes are used for natural fibers. Natural fibers are

animal, vegetable, or mineral materials which occur in fibrous form in a natural state. Two such natural fibers are cotton and wool.

Union dyes are used to dye man-made fibers. These are fibers produced by man from mineral substances such as chemically produced synthetics. Two examples of man-made fibers are polyester and rayon. However, in order to get a certain color, a union dye was sometimes mixed with a direct dye.

To facilitate the explanation of the dye process, I will list the steps.

1. Enough water to cover the fabric completely is brought to a boil. We used a big, deep pan. The pan was centered on two burners because of its size and to hasten the heating process.

2. The dye is dissolved. I filled a coffee can with hot water and then added the dye. Because these dyes are highly concentrated, I used approximately three and one-half ( $3\frac{1}{2}$ ) teaspoons of dye for ten (10) yards of fabric. The dye is

stirred until thoroughly dissolved. Fabric samples are then dipped into the dye to check color.

3. While the water is heating and the dye dissolving, the fabric to be dyed is thoroughly saturated with water, preferably in a washing machine to insure even distribution. This washing is necessary to remove any dirt and/or temporary finishes, such as sizing, that might be in the fabric. Since I had washed the fabric to pre-shrink it, this washing was mainly to remove any dirt that might be in it. The fabric is removed from the machine while still saturated with water. It should be allowed to sit in water until it is added to the dye bath. This allows for further softening of the fibers and helps the fabric become more susceptible to the dye.

4. When the water reaches the boiling point, water softener is added.

5. The dye is slowly poured into the water. This is done carefully because any undissolved granules of dye would

have settled to the bottom. If done slowly, these granules will not escape into the boiling water.

6. The wet fabric is placed into the dye bath.

7. Salt is added to the dye. Salt acts as a setting agent and prevents the dye from rubbing off. Vinegar is sometimes used as a setting agent but usually for wool or silk.

8. While the fabric is boiling, it should be kept moving by use of wooden paddles or sticks. This will insure a more even distribution of dye over the fabric. Color was also checked from time to time.

9. When the fabric is dyed (the amount of time that is required depends on fabric and color needed), it is removed from the dye bath and rinsed in cold water. This is best accomplished in a washing machine.

10. The dyed fabric is dried and pressed.

## Silk-Screening

As the fabric was being dyed, the silk-screening process was taking place.

Ideally, the fabric should have been cut before silk-screening. This would allow for a more precise pattern placement. However, because of time and crew distribution, this could not take place.

Since this discussion will include many terms involved in the silk-screening process, I will define those terms before continuing.

1. Silk-Screening: a process of printing by forcing ink through a piece of silk stretched on a wooden frame. Various methods are used for blocking out portions of the silk allowing the ink to pass through only in the open areas desired.

2. Stencil: a sheet of paper, metal, acetate or similar material into which a design has been cut to be reproduced by application of ink.

3. Squeegee: rubber-edged tool used to force the ink through the silk.



4. Inks: lacquer-based colors used in silk-screening.

5. Cleaning Solvent: solvent similar to turpentine. It removes inks and the stencil from the silk-screen.

6. Stencil Adhering Solvent: special solvent that melts the film thereby causing it to adhere to the silk.

7. Water-base Blockout: a special water soluble solution. It is used to block-out areas that are not needed or desired in the design.

Again, to facilitate matters, I will list the steps in this process:

1. To begin with, a silk-screen is needed. Fortunately, the costume shop had one complete silk-screen and a frame and silk for another. To complete the second silk-screen was simply a matter of stretching the silk evenly over the frame and stapling it on (this procedure is much like building a flat but in miniature form).

2. The patterns needed are cut in the stencils. I had purchased stencil film that was made up of two thin layers

of film. Because the stencil was quite transparent, the design could be placed underneath and traced with a sharp matte knife. Great care must be taken, however. The knife can only penetrate the first layer of film. After the design was traced, the first layer of film was peeled, thereby exposing the design. There were twelve patterns to be cut in twelve separate stencils. The patterns were quite simple and each was printed in one color only. If one were to use more than one color to a pattern, one would have to cut a separate stencil for each color used. This becomes quite complex. Because this was the first time I had ever silk-screened, I wanted to keep the designs simple and bold.

3. The stencils are adhered to the silk-screen. This was done by placing the screen flat side up. The stencil was centered on the frame, pattern side down, and held in place by strips of masking tape. The frame was then turned over and the adhering liquid applied to the stencil as swiftly and carefully as

possible. If too much liquid is applied, the pattern could be dissolved. The frame was turned over again and the bottom layer of film peeled away. This should be done carefully and in one steady movement.

4. If the stencil does not completely cover the frame, newspaper padding should be placed around the stencil and held down firmly by masking tape. This keeps the ink from seeping through to the fabric.

5. The next step was to print the fabric. The fabric was stretched out on a flat surface. The silk-screen was placed (flat side down) on one end of the fabric, along a selvage edge, and the ink applied to the screen along the upper edge of the stencil. Then, using the squeegee with a continuous, steady movement, the ink was forced through the screen and onto the fabric. I found that it usually takes three separate movements to print the pattern well. This process is continued until the fabric is completely printed.

6. The fabric is removed and allowed to dry. Once dry, it should be pressed with a hot steam iron. This will set the pattern and one can then wash the fabric without fear of the ink running.

7. The screen is cleaned. The stencil and all traces of ink are removed with cleaning solvent.

This process is continued until all fabric has been printed.

Hand Painting Fabric  
and Jewel Applica-  
tion

After the printed fabric had been cut, metallic patterns were hand painted onto the fabric. These patterns were flowing in nature and were created by mixing gold bronzing powder and Swift's Flexible Adhesive. This mixture was applied to the fabric with an half-inch brush.

Once the mixture was dry, fake faceted jewels in appropriate colors were glued to the fabric with Swift's Flexible Adhesive. The jewels were placed in such a way as to enhance the printed pattern and to add depth to the fabric.

Patterns and  
Construction

Most of the patterns used for Country Wife were period patterns.

In the case of the period patterns, they were duplicated by using an overhead projector. A large piece of paper was taped to a wall. The pattern needed was placed in the projector and projected onto the paper. Since all patterns used included scales, it was a simple matter to adjust the projector until I had reached the proper size. The projected pattern was traced and cut out of the paper.

A brief discussion follows on the use of the patterns and techniques employed in the construction of the various costumes.

1. Men's Shirts: The pattern for the men's shirts was adapted from a contemporary shirt pattern. The front, back and sleeve pieces were enlarged, through spreading, to allow for more fullness.

The shirts were made of muslin. Construction was quite simple. The back

piece had a six inch (6") opening that was faced. It was then joined to the front at the shoulders and sides using a normal seam allowance. A one inch (1") casing was sewn one inch (1") above the sleeve ending. The sleeve under-arm seams were then joined.

At this point the shirts were fitted to check shoulder seams, armhole size and to mark the location of the waistline. Collars were also tried on to insure proper fit.

A one inch (1") casing was then placed one inch (1") below the waistline of the shirt body and the shirt completed by attaching sleeves and collar. Elastic was inserted into the sleeve casings and a drawstring was inserted into the waistline casing. The drawstring could then be drawn up so that the shirt would blouse over the pants' waistband. Felt lace completed the sleeves.

2. Waistcoats: The waistcoat pattern was taken from The Evolution of Fashion,

page 112. Since it was a pattern based on a man's size 38-40 chest, it was necessary to enlarge the pattern for some of the actors.

The waistcoats were made of felt and lined with matching muslin. The muslin linings were cut and constructed, using a basting stitch, first. They were then fitted. Alterations were pinned during the fitting, then marked with tailor's chalk. The linings were taken apart, chalk lines trued, and the alterations made. The altered linings were used as patterns to cut the felt.

The muslin linings and the felt pieces were constructed separately. The felt and muslin were pinned, right sides of the fabric together and bagged. The waistcoats were pressed and fitted again to mark the placement of buttons and buttonholes.

3. Breeches: The breeches pattern was taken from The Cut of Men Clothes, page 108. Again, it was necessary to enlarge the pattern to fit most of the actors.

The breeches were constructed from heavyweight muslin that had been dyed, silk-screened and hand painted. They were basted for the first fitting. After the initial fitting, the waist and leg bands were added. Another fitting was required to insure proper placement of hooks and bars.

4. Women's bodices: The period bodice patterns that I needed were in stock. Therefore, I did not need to draft these.

The bodices were cut from natural colored heavyweight muslin. All except Lucy's, which opened up the front, were open up the back.

Again, the bodices were basted together for the first fitting. Alterations were marked with tailor's chalk and the altered pieces served as pattern pieces.

The bodice was then cut from the actual fabric (in this case, the silk-screened muslin). The bodice pieces were backed with the plain muslin pieces



by zig-zagging them together, thus forming a backing for each piece. This would give the bodice added strength since they had to fit very tightly. The seams were joined and the bodice was refitted. The bodice was then finished and the stomacher pieces with lace trim added. Bone casings were cross-stitched in by hand and boning inserted. Hooks were used to close the center back opening.

5. Underskirts: No pattern was required for these. They were cut from taffeta, using the full width of the fabric. They were gathered onto waistbands which closed in the center back.

6. Overskirts: The pattern for the overskirts was adapted from a McCall's pattern, number 8942.

The overskirts were cut from the same fabric as the bodices and were quite simple to construct. Once the pieces were seamed together, three rows of gathering stitches were sewn

up side front and side back seam lines. When gathered, the folds and puffs that the overskirts needed were created. The gathering stitches were stay-stitched in place. The overskirt was gathered onto the bodice and hemmed. To insure that the fullness of the overskirt would remain, muslin bags were used as "underproppers." These bags were placed on the inside of the overskirt and centered on the right and left sides.

#### Special Building Projects

1. Men's Shoes: As I have stated before, I had purchased cowboy boots for the actors. These had to be cut down to form the period-looking shoe that was required. This was done by cutting along the seam line dividing the lower part of the boot from the upper part. Razor blades were used to cut down the boots. The seam lines were reinforced with leather thread and an elastic strap was sewn in to insure a snug fit.

2. Felt Lace: This was a simple but time consuming process. It was essentially making lace out of felt. The felt was cut in the various shapes and sizes needed for sleeves and trim. Each piece was then taken and myriad, random shapes were created in the piece of felt by cutting. This method is very close to making snowflakes from paper. Edges were scalloped or treated with a uniform pattern. There was no attempt to make the felt look like realistic lace. Again, I wanted bold patterns and shapes. There was, however, an attempt to make sure that each set of felt lace used the same shapes so that there would be conformity.

3. Fontages, Hats: A fontage is basically tiers of ruffles or lace, worn by women during the Restoration period. The fontages constructed for Country Wife were adapted from a pattern in The Evolution of Fashion, page 117. They were made out of white felt

that had been pleated, steamed and then brushed with buckram stiffner. When thoroughly dry, the fontages were sewn onto headbands covered with white fabric. The headbands were trimmed with lace.

The men's hats were pulled from stock and, quite simply, trimmed with feathers and plumes in colors that would enhance the costume with which they would be worn.

4. Muffs: The muffs that the men wore in Country Wife were based on muffs worn during the Restoration. However, the muffs I constructed were quite suggestive and, in most cases, quite symbolic.

The shapes were cut from felt, then brushed with buckram stiffner. When dry, the pieces were zig-zagged together, leaving an opening in the top so that they were functionable. Straps were zig-zagged to the top of the muff and fitted on the actor to insure proper placement. The ends of the straps were finished and the muffs were decorated

with metallic patterns and jewels.

5. Masks: Four masks were called for. They needed to be quite simple since the women wearing them removed them on stage. Therefore, I made them from single layers of felt. Twill tape ties were zig-zagged on. The masks were decorated with jewels, metallic paint and lace.

#### Finishing Details

The costumes were basically completed. All that remained was trim. This trim varied from costume to costume but was essentially bows or rosettes with streamers. These trim items were fashioned from ribbon and florist's ribbon. They were hand sewn on.

Finally, costume accessories were assigned to each costume. This included fans, handkerchiefs, jewelry and hose for the women and snuff boxes, handkerchiefs, jewelry, hose and some canes for the men.

#### Technical Rehearsals

The technical rehearsals requiring costumes were March 2, 3 and 4, 1975. I met with the costume running crew prior to March 2 and went over each

costume with them. We then established, with the aid of the actors, where costumes needed to be placed backstage for quick changes.

For the most part, the technical rehearsals went quite smoothly. Several things should, however, be mentioned.

First of all, it was decided to strike the men's sashes. Both the director and I felt that they did not work. They were intended to accentuate waistlines. However, because of body types they, instead, cut them in two. It was not pleasing.

Secondly, it was decided to have the men wear their muffs to the side rather than hanging down the front. It was more aesthetically pleasing to the line of the costume since the sashes were not being used.

Having made these changes, the costumes were completed. I now turned them over to actors, running and maintenance crews, and sat back to evaluate.

## CHAPTER V

### EVALUATION

An evaluation of your own artistic endeavor is often futile. However, it is necessary to personal growth.

The costumes for Country Wife were a personal expression of the design concept of a "combination of the flowing grace of Fantasia and the boldness, blockiness of Yellow Submarine." Evaluating that personal expression involves the director's concept, other design aspects such as set and lights, and, finally, the costumes themselves.

I believe, as did the director, that the costumes enhanced the design concept quite well. The cartoon quality, artificiality and characterization were integral to that design concept.

The cartoon quality of Fantasia and Yellow Submarine was enhanced by the strong colors of fabric and prints and the basically simple shapes of the costumes. A soft, draping sleeve and a stiff, boned bodice or a large, colorful block print and the swirl of a metallic pattern provided contrasts that enhanced the elements of grace, boldness and blockiness at the same time.

The use of fake jewels, costume jewelry and metallic

patterns on fabric stressed not only the cartoon quality but also artificiality. These design motifs aided the general design concept quite well.

Characterization was a part of the design concept that succeeded in varying degrees. Costumes for Sparkish, Sir Jasper, and Lucy were quite successful as characterizations. Pinchwife and Horner achieved success to a lesser degree. Most of the women's costumes, namely Lady Fidget, Dainty Fidget, and Lady Squeamish, did not succeed nearly as well.

The costume characterizations, such as Sparkish, Sir Jasper, and Lucy, succeeded because of the individual touches. For example, Sparkish's total excess of lace and trim, his grossly over-sized muff and the feather on his hat that constantly fell in his face were individual touches that enhanced his nature.

Pinchwife and Horner were almost successful but would have succeeded totally if more individual touches had been evident. Pinchwife's total appearance might have been enhanced if his waistcoat had been noticeably shorter in relation to those worn by the other men.

Lady Fidget, Dainty Fidget and Lady Squeamish were basically the same in terms of line and treatment. Because of this, their costumes lacked individual characterization. I feel that I could have established character through the use of trim. For example, Lady Squeamish's costume should have



had more bows with perhaps two large bows on each side at the waist.

It is my belief that, generally, I sacrificed variety for simplicity, and did not allow enough latitude for characterization in those costumes that were not successful.

Exaggeration was one of the design techniques I had used to establish characterization. However, shortly after construction of the costumes had begun, it became apparent that the acting area and door sizes would have to become smaller. Also, the self-closing doors on the set would undoubtedly cause problems if trim was too long or too big. Therefore, some of the exaggerated qualities, such as the women's overskirts, had to be scaled down. At this point, I reduced the fullness in the men's shirt sleeves in order to conform with the reduction of the fullness in the men's waistcoats. As I thought about it later, I realized that this was a mistake. The original fullness of the sleeves would have provided a more pleasing enhancement of "the flowing grace of Fantasia."

The exaggerated quality of tiers of felt lace also suffered from reduction. I was unable to get the total amount of yardage I needed and, unfortunately, the various fabric stores were unable to obtain more in time.

The unity of sets and costumes, as mentioned in chapter three, is extremely important. The designs for set and costumes exhibited a strong unity that did not, however, materialize in the final product. The busyness and conflicting

styles of the set and costumes was quite distracting.

The costumes themselves needed to maintain unity, balance and consistency of line, fabric and color in order to have a strong relationship to one another. These relationships between costumes worked in varying degrees.

Line maintained unity, balance and consistency with one notable exception. Margery Pinchwife's costume, although intended to be outdated in comparison to the other ladies, was much too different. It became distracting.

Fabric worked quite well in terms of unity, balance and consistency. However, there were exceptions particularly in terms of those items pulled from costume stock. Margery Pinchwife's costume and Alithea's cape were the worst examples of this. Margery's costume was made of lightweight cotton and cotton eyelet. Alithea's cape was made of velour. These fabrics, quite noticeably, lacked the cartoon quality, color and texture of the other fabrics used in the costumes.

However, Sparkish's coat had been pulled from costume stock. It tended to work because it had a soft quality similar to the soft quality of the felt waistcoats. Shortening the sleeves of his coat and adding wide cuffs of the same fabric as his breeches gave him a layered quality that aided Sparkish's excessive nature.

Color was definitely a problem. Since much of the fabric was dyed, it was important that the colors maintain a strong

unity. In some cases this did not happen. The worst examples of this were Harcourt's breeches and Margery Pinchwife's apron and cape. The colors in these costumes were not strong enough, therefore they appeared to be out of place compared to the other costumes. Part of the problem was sheer inexperience on my part. Part of it was a time factor. Hopefully, I have learned enough about dyeing from this project to allow myself the time to do it properly and carefully.

Further, Harcourt's color relationship to Alithea was nonexistent. I had hoped that the heart motif would relate them. However, this did not happen. The heart motif could have worked well if it had been used more and if Harcourt's trim and/or block print had been a shade of purple or red-violet.

The colors of the overskirts of Dainty Fidget and Lady Squeamish, as rendered in the design plates, were deepened during the dyeing process. Both color changes were done because the director felt he would like deeper shades of the design colors. This turned out to be a fortunate decision. During the construction of the set, the base color of the various flats was changed and the blue and pink accent colors deepened in value. The color changes worked better, not only in relation to the deep colors of other costumes, but also because this provided the strong contrast that the director wanted between set and costumes. The original colors would not have done this.

Basically, I was quite pleased with the colors except for Margery Pinchwife and Harcourt. The colors produced the cartoon quality that I wanted. Whether the audience realized the symbolism of the colors is very difficult to analyze. Color association is a very personal matter. I would say that the more obvious color symbolism, such as Horner's black, Pinchwife's earth colors and the color groups of warm (Horner, Dorilant, Harcourt) and cool (Sir Jasper, Lady Fidget, Dainty Fidget, Lady Squeamish) values was apparent to the audience. However, the symbolism of warm and cool color values, as used in Alithea and Sparkish, was more obtuse and therefore probably not apparent to the average audience member.

Finally, the various construction techniques involved in Country Wife were most illuminating and very important to my growth as a designer. Many of the processes used in the construction of the costumes, such as silk-screening, hand painting metallic patterns onto fabric, adapting modern cowboy boots into period shoes, and using felt as lace, were unfamiliar to me. For the most part, I was quite pleased with the results of these various processes.

Silk-screening was time consuming and, sometimes, frustrating because of time consumed and my inexperience. I do not believe that I used the silk-screen process as effectively as possible in terms of pattern placement and accent of line. However, the possibilities of silk-screening are well worth exploring.

Metallic patterns proved to be a quick and effective method of enhancing fabric and line.

Adapting the cowboy boots was partially successful. Because they were basically inexpensive, the construction of the boots was cheap. That is, there was no support in the sides of the boots once they had been cut down. Therefore, the sides tended to stretch out, requiring elastic straps to keep them on the actors' feet. Regardless of this problem, I very much liked the look of the shoes and feel that they helped to enhance the acting style. In the future, I would be more discriminating in my choice of boots to adapt.

The use of felt as lace is a time consuming but uncomplicated procedure with many possibilities. The felt lace worked best when it was gathered onto a sleeve or collar. As I mentioned earlier, the intended volume of felt lace had to be reduced because of lack of material. Because of this, much of the felt lace could not be gathered on. Instead, it exactly fit a particular opening, such as a sleeve. This tended to give it a flat quality, which was not as pleasing as the volumetric quality of Sparkish's felt lace.

The lack of white felt necessitated the use of pellow, a non-woven interfacing fabric, on Dainty Fidget's bodice sleeves. I was less pleased with the pellow because it lacked the softness of the felt.

In summation, the costumes for Country Wife succeeded in

some aspects and failed in others. However, it was a learning experience that was totally invaluable for me and, in the final analysis, very rewarding to my growth as a designer.

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## A P P E N D I C E S

## A P P E N D I X    A

## COSTUME PLOT

### Act I, Scene I

Horner  
Dorilant (disguised as Quack)  
Sir Jasper  
Lady Fidget  
Dainty Fidget

### Act I, Scene II

Horner  
Harcourt  
Dorilant

### Act I, Scene III

Horner  
Harcourt  
Dorilant  
Sparkish

### Act I, Scene IV

Horner  
Harcourt  
Dorilant  
Pinchwife

### Act II, Scene I

Pinchwife  
Margery  
Alithea

### Act II, Scene II

Harcourt  
Pinchwife  
Sparkish  
Alithea

### Act II, Scene III

Pinchwife

Lady Fidget  
Lady Squeamish  
Dainty Fidget

Act II, Scene IV

Horner  
Dorilant  
Sir Jasper  
Lady Fidget  
Lady Squeamish  
Dainty Fidget

Act III, Scene I

Pinchwife  
Margery  
Alithea

Act III, Scene II

Horner  
Harcourt  
Dorilant  
Sparkish

Act III, Scene III

Horner  
Harcourt  
Dorilant  
Pinchwife  
Sparkish  
Margery (disguised as boy)  
Alithea  
Lucy

Act IV, Scene I

Alithea (cape)  
Lucy

Act IV, Scene II

Harcourt (disguised as parson)  
Sparkish  
Alithea  
Lucy

Act IV, Scene III

Pinchwife  
Margery

Act IV, Scene IV

Pinchwife  
Margery

Act IV, Scene V

Horner  
Dorilant  
Lady Fidget

Act IV, Scene VI

Horner  
Sir Jasper  
Lady Fidget

Act IV, Scene VII

Horner  
Sir Jasper  
Lady Fidget  
Lady Squeamish

Act IV, Scene VIII

Horner  
Pinchwife  
Sir Jasper  
Lady Fidget  
Lady Squeamish

Act IV, Scene IX

Horner  
Dorilant  
Pinchwife  
Sparkish

Act IV, Scene X

Pinchwife  
Margery

Act IV, Scene XI

Pinchwife  
Sparkish  
Margery

Act V, Scene I

Pinchwife  
Margery (disguised as Alithea)

Act V, Scene II

Horner  
Pinchwife  
Margery

Act V, Scene III

Horner  
Sir Jasper

Act V, Scene IV

Pinchwife  
Sparkish  
Alithea  
Lucy

Act V, Scene V

Horner  
Lady Fidget (mask)  
Lady Squeamish (mask)  
Dainty Fidget (mask)

Act V, Scene VI

Horner  
Dorilant  
Sir Jasper  
Margery  
Lady Fidget  
Lady Squeamish  
Dainty Fidget

Act V, Scene VII

Horner  
Harcourt

Dorilant  
Pinchwife  
Sparkish  
Alitheia  
Lucy

Act V, Scene VIII

Horner  
Harcourt  
Dorilant  
Pinchwife  
Margery  
Alitheia  
Lucy

Act V, Scene IX

Horner  
Harcourt  
Pinchwife  
Sir Jasper  
Sparkish  
Margery  
Lady Fidget  
Lady Squeamish  
Dainty Fidget  
Alitheia  
Lucy

Act V, Scene X

Horner  
Harcourt  
Dorilant (disguised as Quack, then parson, then Quack again)  
Pinchwife  
Sparkish  
Sir Jasper  
Margery  
Lady Fidget  
Lady Squeamish  
Dainty Fidget  
Alitheia  
Lucy

## A P P E N D I X    B





1. HORNER





2. HARCOURT





3. DORILANT





## 4. SPARKISH





## 5. PINCHWIFE





6. SIR JASPER





7. MARGERY PINCHWIFE





8. ALITHEA





9. LADY FIDGET



10. DAINITY FIDGET







11. L A D Y S Q U E A M I S H





12. L U C Y